

Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy 2022-27

Including Minimum Revenue Provision Policy
Statement and Annual Investment Strategy

January 2022

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Introduction

- 1.1 The Capital and Treasury Management Strategies are fundamental to the effective delivery of the Council's priorities and Vision 2025. The provision of the right asset in the right place at the right time will ensure the effective and efficient delivery of a comprehensive range of quality services.
- 1.2 This strategy document provides a high-level long-term overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services, an overview of how the associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.
- 1.3 It sets out an integrated plan for the future management of the Council's assets and its capital programme. It is a key document running alongside the Vision 2025 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and will provide the framework to facilitate a seamless interface between business planning and the management of assets and capital resources. This will ensure that the provision of resources and future investment are prioritised and ensures the effective and affordable management of the Council's assets.
- 1.4 The CIPFA Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in 2017 Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code of Practice, sets out the requirements in relation to the setting of a Capital Strategy. The requirement asks local authorities to consider the longer term as well as the short and medium term to:
 - Ensure that the capital expenditure plans of the council are affordable, prudent and sustainable.
 - Support transparent options appraisal.
 - Giving an outline of future commitments so that the affordability of both the long term plan and any new proposals can be properly understood.
 - Inform prioritisation and timing of projects to ensure that both financial and operational capacity is available for delivery.
 - Provide an overview of risk so that projects and proposals can be viewed in the overall risk context of capital and treasury investments.
 - Enable the ongoing capital and revenue implications of capital expenditure to be better understood and planned for in the Financial Resource Plan.
- 1.5 This Strategy document provides both the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management Strategy as they are inherently linked through the activities they undertake. The document sets out the Capital Programme over a five year period from 2022/23 to 2026/27 and the funding approach through treasury management activities.
- 1.6 In 2021 CIPFA revised their Treasury Management Code and Prudential Code – these changes which will impact on future Treasury Management Strategy and Statement (TMSS) / Annual Investment Statement (AIS) reports and the risk management framework
- 1.7 CIPFA published the revised codes on 20th December 2021 and has stated that formal adoption is not required until the 2023/24 financial year. This Council must have regard to these codes of practice when it prepares the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy, and related reports during the financial year.
- 1.8 The revised codes will have the following implications:
 - a requirement for the Council to adopt a new debt liability benchmark treasury indicator to support the financing risk management of the capital financing requirement;
 - clarify what CIPFA expects a local authority to borrow for and what they do not view as appropriate. This will include the requirement to set a proportionate approach to commercial and service capital investment;

- address Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) issues within the Capital Strategy;
- require implementation of a policy to review commercial property, with a view to divest where appropriate;
- create new Investment Practices to manage risks associated with non-treasury investment (similar to the current Treasury Management Practices);
- ensure that any long term treasury investment is supported by a business model;
- a requirement to effectively manage liquidity and longer term cash flow requirements;
- amendment to Treasury Management Policy 1 (TMP1) to address ESG policy within the treasury management risk framework;
- amendment to the knowledge and skills register for individuals involved in the treasury management function - to be proportionate to the size and complexity of the treasury management conducted by each council;
- a new requirement to clarify reporting requirements for service and commercial investment, (especially where supported by borrowing/leverage).

1.9 In addition, all investments and investment income must be attributed to one of the following three purposes:

a) Treasury management

Arising from the organisation's cash flows or treasury risk management activity, this type of investment represents balances which are only held until the cash is required for use. Treasury investments may also arise from other treasury risk management activity which seeks to prudently manage the risks, costs or income relating to existing or forecast debt or treasury investments.

b) Service delivery

Investments held primarily and directly for the delivery of public services including housing, regeneration and local infrastructure. Returns on this category of investment which are funded by borrowing are permitted only in cases where the income is "either related to the financial viability of the project in question or otherwise incidental to the primary purpose".

c) Commercial return

Investments held primarily for financial return with no treasury management or direct service provision purpose. Risks on such investments should be proportionate to a council's financial capacity – i.e., that 'plausible losses' could be absorbed in budgets or reserves without unmanageable detriment to local services. An authority must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return.

1.10 Members will be updated on how all these changes will impact our current approach and any changes required will be formally adopted within the 2023/24 TMSS report.

1.11 Capital Strategy

1.12 The key aims of the Capital Strategy are to:

- Provide a clear context within which proposals for capital expenditure are evaluated to ensure all capital investment is targeted to deliver the Council's priorities.
- Clarity about how the Council identifies and prioritises capital requirements and proposals arising from various strategies including the Vision 2025, Service Improvement Plans, and other

corporate strategies, and how they will be managed within the limited capital resources available.

- Challenge our current estate, continue with the programme of asset rationalisation, ensuring that assets retained are effective, efficient and economically sustainable to deliver services.
- Identify and consider options available to fund capital expenditure that minimises the ongoing revenue implications of historic capital expenditure and of any new investments.
- Use partnerships, both public and private, more effectively to support our overall strategy.
- Establish effective arrangements for managing capital schemes including assessment of outcomes and achievement of value for money.
- Ensure there is a full understanding of the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.

1.13 It is a requirement that the capital strategy demonstrates that the Local Authority takes both capital and investments decisions in line with service objectives. The capital strategy shows that the key drivers of the Council's Capital plans are captured through various plans across the authority. These include

- Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP)
- Welsh Housing Quality Standard Plan (WHQS)
- Strategic Asset Management Plan (including Asset Review, paragraph 2.18)
- Schools Transformation Plan
- Health and Care Strategy
- Service Integrated Business Plans
- Digital Powys

1.14 Treasury Management

1.15 The Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy report is a requirement of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and a requirement under the Local Government Act 2003. It has regard to the Guidance on Local Government Investments issued by the Welsh Government which requires the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy to be approved by Full Council.

CIPFA defines treasury management as:

'The management of the local authority's borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.'

1.16 The Council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in low risk counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's low risk appetite, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.

- 1.17 A key function of the treasury management service is arranging the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans or using longer-term cash flow surpluses. On occasion, when it is prudent and economic, any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.
- 1.18 The treasury operations will see a balance of the interest costs of debt and the investment income arising from cash deposits affecting the available budget. Since cash balances generally result from reserves and balances, it is paramount to ensure adequate security of the sums invested, as a loss of principal will in effect result in a loss to the General Fund Balance.
- 1.19 This authority has engaged in only minimal commercial investments and has no (or immaterial) non-treasury investments.

1.20 Treasury Management and Capital Reporting Arrangements

- 1.21 The Council is currently required to receive and approve at Cabinet, as a minimum, three main treasury/capital reports each year, which incorporate a variety of policies, estimates and actuals.

Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy

- Prudential and treasury indicators and treasury and capital strategy (this report) - The first, and most important report is forward looking and covers:
- The capital plans, (including prudential indicators).
- A minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy, (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time).
- Capital strategy and capital programme
- The treasury management strategy, (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised), including treasury indicators; and
- An investment strategy, (the parameters on how investments are to be managed).

A mid-year treasury management report

- This is primarily a progress report and will update members on the capital position, amending prudential indicators if necessary, and whether any policies require revision. Quarterly update reports will also be provided.

An annual treasury report

- This is a backward looking review document and provides details of a selection of actual prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operations compared to the estimates within the strategy.
- The above Treasury reports are required to be adequately scrutinised before being recommended to the Cabinet. This role is undertaken by the Governance and Audit Committee.

In addition to the minimum requirement,

Quarterly capital reports to Cabinet

- Providing an update on the capital spend, reprofiling and virement changes and funding that support delivery of the programme, with a year-end reflection of the actual against plan and reasons for the final month's changes from the forecast.

1.22 Treasury Management Strategy

The strategy covers two main areas:

a) Capital issues

- The capital programme and funding regime and the associated prudential indicators.
- The minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy.

b) Treasury management issues

- The current treasury position.
- Treasury indicators which limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council.
- Prospects for interest rates.
- The borrowing strategy.
- Policy on borrowing in advance of need.
- Debt rescheduling.
- The investment strategy.
- Creditworthiness policy; and
- Policy on use of external service providers.

1.23 These elements cover the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, the CIPFA Prudential Code, Welsh Government MRP Guidance, the CIPFA Treasury Management Code and Welsh Government Investment Guidance.

1.24 Training

1.25 The CIPFA Code requires the responsible officer to ensure that members with responsibility for treasury management receive adequate training in treasury management. This especially applies to members responsible for scrutiny. The Authority holds two briefing sessions per year for members and members must ensure that they attend at least one of these. The training needs of treasury management officers are periodically reviewed.

1.26 Financial training in managing the financial aspects of capital projects is available for those that manage capital projects and takes place regularly throughout the year.

1.27 Treasury Management Consultants

- 1.28 The Council uses Link Group, Treasury Solutions as its external treasury management advisors. They also support on Capital advice. The Council recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions always remains with the organisation and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon the services of our external service providers. All decisions will be undertaken with regards to all available information, including, but not solely, our treasury advisers.
- 1.29 It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented and subjected to regular review.

Capital Strategy

2.1 Background

2.2 Part 1, Section 3 of the Local Government Finance Act 2003 requires that the Authority shall determine and keep under review how much it can afford to borrow. The Act is supported by the Prudential Framework for local authority capital investment and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Code). The CIPFA Prudential Code was revised in December 2017. The revised Code introduced a new requirement that all authorities produce a capital strategy, which sets out the long-term context in which capital expenditure and investment decisions are made.

2.3 The Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) are closely linked, and both are revised annually. The Capital Strategy defines the Council's spending and the TMS sets out how it will be funded and its impact on the overall financial standing of the Council.

2.4 Aims, Priorities and Principles

2.5 The purpose of this strategy is to set out the objectives, principles and governance framework to ensure that the Authority takes capital expenditure and investment decisions in line with service objectives that underpin the delivery of the Corporate Improvement Plan through Vision 2025. The Council's Vision sets out the key priorities and objectives of the Council for the period to 31 March 2025.

2.6 Vision 2025 sets out the long-term vision for the council under four priority areas (aligned to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 objectives).

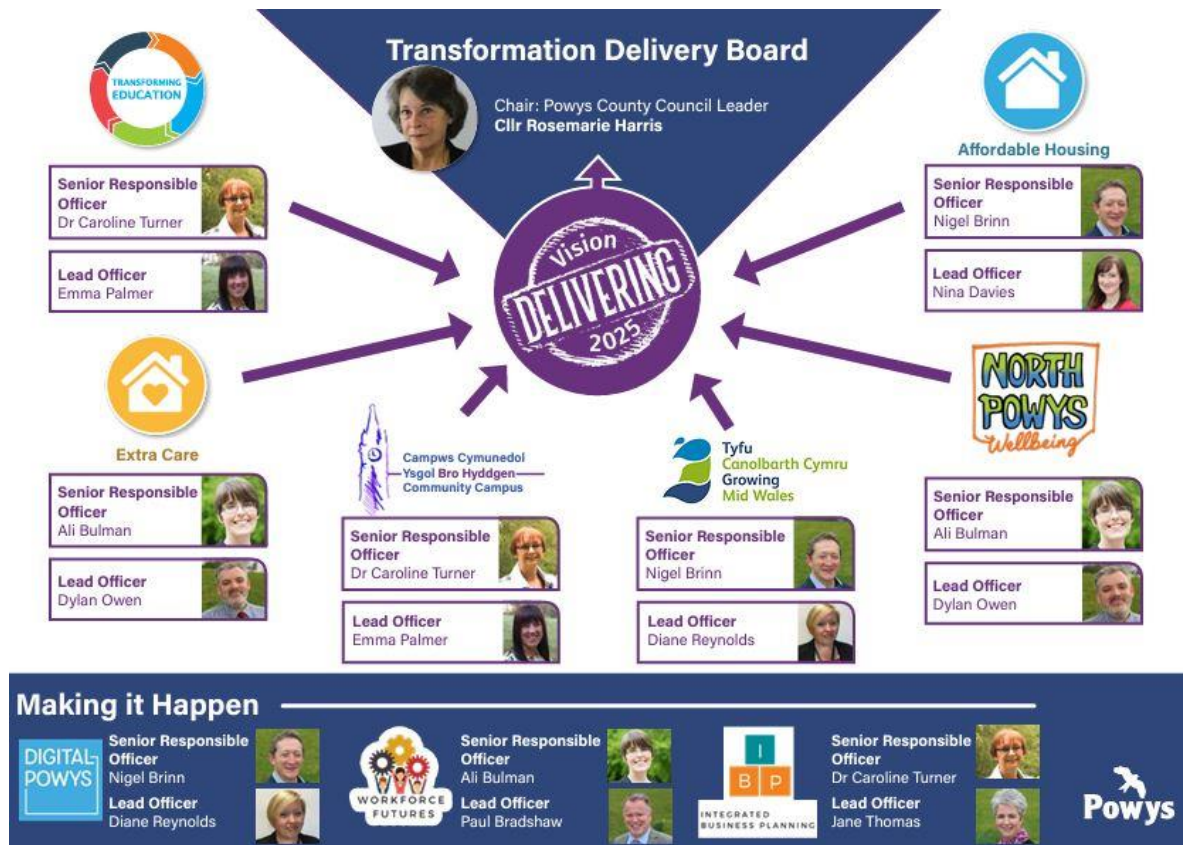


2.7 Programme Overview

2.8 The Capital Programme is a key enabler to deliver the Council's ambition set out in Vision 2025. Broadly the programme covers three areas of expenditure:

- a core programme of schemes that are regulatory / statutory in nature, and minimise legal challenge or revenue risk, these schemes are related to day-to-day activities that will ensure the Council meets its statutory requirements
- a retained asset programme to improve or enhance the life of existing assets, and
- an investment programme in schemes linked to the Council's strategic priorities, such as schemes to increase the diversification of the Council's property portfolio or reduce the revenue costs of running and maintaining the assets.

2.9 Vision 2025 will be delivered, in part, through its nine Transformation Programmes, as shown in the diagram below. The six Service Transformation programmes all require capital funding to deliver their transformation agenda.



Capital Investment across Services

2.10 The Council has developed its capital strategy which sets out a five year long-term plan and demonstrates that the capital / investments decisions are taken in line with priorities and considers both risk/reward and impact; as well as properly taking account of stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability.

2.11 The Council will continue to invest in services that underpin the priorities set out as part of Vision 2025, the key themes have clear service projects:

Residents and the Community - We will support our Residents and Communities.

- **Housing** - The Council will continue to maintain, for all the homes it owns, the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) with an ongoing capital programme in part funded through Welsh Government Funding and Borrowing. The Housing Revenue Account Thirty Year Business Plan demonstrates an affordable capital strategy alongside delivering the day-to-day landlord service and has key

objectives linked to the Local Housing Strategy. The Council has completed the construction and letting of 39 new homes with a further 79 under construction and a further 198 under active consideration for future development (dependent upon site acquisitions, viability assessments and resolution of the phosphates issues affecting development of all types). The Council will continue to fund a major programme of Disabled Facilities Grants enabled works and improvements to homes to improve the quality of life for people who need help to live as independently as possible. In addition, Housing Services will continue to support energy efficiency and bringing privately owned empty homes back into use through the SWAS (Safe Warm & Secure), Landlord Loans and the ZILF Co2i loan schemes.

- **Leisure Centres** - The Leisure portfolio contributes to the preventative agenda, supporting the Public Health Wales Long Term Strategy (2018-30) as well as, health interventions such as the NERS program (National Exercise Referral Scheme), in collaboration with Powys Teaching Health Boards and General Practices, within Powys. Since 2019 the Council has approved a five-year programme which has already enabled significant, essential replacement of plant, fixtures, end-of-life equipment, structural materials, playing surfaces and decoration. The Capital commitment supports the Council's 'landlord' responsibilities as part of the leisure contract but also ensures that the buildings are fit for purpose, compliant, attractive and provide a positive customer experience. Leisure Services in Powys not only support the overall well-being of our 'residents and communities' and now more than ever, contribute to the 'health & care' agendas, providing early intervention and prevention programmes to help reduce the burden on health services. Also, as a collaborative partner to the School's Transformation Programme, enabling learning and development through specific opportunities that the service provides or facilitates. Leisure Services support and contribute to the 'economy' by hosting and delivering local, regional and national events and competitions which draws significant numbers of visitors from across the UK to utilise the facilities we have in Powys – and demonstrates the need for the facilities to be maintained and improved to an appropriate standard.
- **Waste Strategy** - Powys County Council faces a stringent WG statutory recycling target of 64% for 2019/20 through to 70% for 2024/25. There is also a non-statutory WG target to reduce landfill to 10% by 2019/20 reducing to 5% by 2024/25. This has required a step change in the way all local authorities approach waste and recycling. The continued capital investment in the Waste and Recycling service will ensure that the Council is able to meet the targets whilst obtaining maximum value from the service. A network of assets under the Council's control allows flexibility to adapt to any changing requirements within the industry and Government policy and legislation. Some of these schemes are linked to efficiency savings and service improvements in future years.

Health and Care – We will lead the way in providing effective, integrated Health and Care in a rural environment

- **Social Care** - The capital programme focuses on supporting those who wish to remain in their own home rather than residential care and supports the integrated Health and Care Strategy for Powys. This strategy acknowledges that people in Powys live longer and healthier lives than elsewhere in Wales and that Powys is a place aspiring to help improve the wellbeing of all people. Capital funding mainly focus on accommodation options, including supporting the building and redevelopment of facilities to increase the stock of supported living and extra care housing in collaboration with Powys Teaching Health Board and local Registered Social Landlords. There are also capital funding requirements for the 13 Powys owned care homes.
- **Children's Services** – In order to ensure a sufficient supply of appropriate, safe placements for children in care, as close to home as possible, investment is mostly focused upon small residential homes for children, with accommodation purchase and development of a range of placements in County to support the complex needs of young people who remain under the local authority's care.

Welsh Government have been particularly supportive in offering investment to progress such developments, as mirrored in current Ministerial direction.

The changes associated with ICF (Integrated Care Fund) through Regional Partnership Boards (RPB), identify long term collaborative projects that will require a financial commitment from all partners, including PCC over a period of time. This will need to be acknowledged as part of social care's transformation plans, associated with the future development of any such resource.

- **Assistive Technology** - has a key role to play in the modernisation of health and social care. With ever increasing technological advances, it offers a range of possibilities for greater choice, not only of how people can access the support they need, but also where and when they access support. In doing so, assistive technology enables people to take greater control, and to live independently for longer by preventing hospital admissions and premature moves to residential care. Enabling access to better accommodation options is essential in order to support independent living and reduce demand for other types of care.

Learning and Skills – We will strengthen learning and skills.

- **Schools Transformation** - The Council has developed a new ten-year Strategy to Transform Education in Powys 2020-30 with the implementation of a major capital investment programme that will ensure that schools in Powys have inspiring, environmentally sustainable buildings that can provide opportunities for wider community activity, including where possible childcare services, early years, ALN, multi-agency support and community and leisure facilities. This will also include developing a reliable, high quality digital infrastructure. The Council is investing £118m over the next five years in its schools through the current Band A and Band B of the Welsh Government's 21st C Schools Programme. The 21st C Schools Programme has a 65% capital intervention rate for mainstream schools, 75% for special schools and it also offers a new and innovative funding route where the intervention rate is 85% for the Mutual Investment Model. The Council will develop its strategies to ensure maximisation of the potential investment opportunities that may be available via WG funding.

However, to deliver the full Schools Transformation Programme, significant funding sources above what is currently included in the current Capital Programme will be required. That said, the cost of transformation over the lifetime of the schools assets is cheaper than the status quo in the majority of localities.

Alongside this, capital funding through our major repairs programme will be focussed on where the need is greatest, as identified through the Schools Service's Asset Management Plan.

The Economy – We will develop a vibrant economy.

- **Highways and Environment** - The Council has a statutory duty to maintain the adopted highway, maintained at public expense in a safe condition for the passage of the user. A strategic approach has been used to develop the HAMP in identifying and allocating resources for the management, operation, preservation and enhancement of the highway infrastructure to meet the needs of current and future customers. Current gross replacement cost of these assets is estimated at £4.4bn.

The highway network includes public rights of way, which are a major attraction to the county for visitors. There are 1,700 recorded bridge structures on the public rights of way network; most are Council assets. Several major bridges (over £100,000 each) need to be replaced within the next 5 years due to age. In addition, storm damage with increased rates of riverside erosion and rotting of timber is affecting many small to medium bridges (up to £50,000 each). A county wide inventory is being developed, to record bridge condition and forward plan for their replacement. Previously, this has been reactive.

Outdoor recreation assets are also a significant tourist attraction and can provide valuable opportunities to maintain and enhance biodiversity. There are two remaining building assets under

management by the Service; investment is needed in one of them, to enable ongoing lease arrangements. Upgrades are also required at Llandrindod Lake to meet new standards due to its designation as a reservoir.

- **Property** - The vision is to ensure that through the Corporate Landlord initiative, the Council's assets are appropriately managed to provide safe, efficient, sustainable properties in the right locations to support the delivery of services and the achievement of key priorities. The Strategic Asset Board and Asset Management Plans are the mechanisms in place to help deliver these priorities, which will ensure close working and collaboration across all service areas and partner organisations such as Neath Port Talbot College / PTHB. The Property team will be supported in this crucial work with investment provided to procure a new Property Management database which will provide a single point of reference for all aspects of the Council's operational and investment estate. A provisional property disposals programme has been developed over the next 10 years.
- **Regeneration, Property and Development** - The Council need to intervene where the private sector is not able (for economic reasons) to create or facilitate investment in business units in order to keep and attract business to the County. Abermule business park is one such scheme that sees the Authority developing a former Welsh Government site which otherwise would not have been developed in the short to medium term. Capital investment will also form an important part of supporting the regeneration and viability of town centres complementing the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns funding programme. An initial annual allocation of £2 million starting in 2022-23 has been included as the Council's contribution towards the Mid Wales Growth Deal. As the investment plans for the deal develop the funding will be released to the relevant projects on completion of the relevant governance and approval processes.
- **County Farms** - It is essential that the Council manages its agricultural estate prudently, efficiently, and professionally. Effective management of County Farms estate will enable the continued opportunities already enjoyed by current tenant farmers and maintain an income stream. The financial demands of the Estate need to be evaluated against the competing demands across the council whilst noting the estate produces an annual surplus in its trading account. The opportunity for capital receipts will continue to arise as reviews are undertaken at each tenant departure from the Estate. An Invest to Save initiative is being developed which will see investments made to the Farm Estate which should create opportunities for capital receipts and reduced revenue expenditure, for example barn conversions and subsequent sales.
- **Information Technology (IT)** - The service engages with change programmes so that investment and resource meets identified priorities. In respect of infrastructure, IT will seek to invest in up-to-date cloud-based technologies including 'Azure' cloud technologies, improved telephony and mobile systems, WEB and share-point and improved wireless as well as further enabling our staff to work in an agile manner.

In terms of applications, IT are looking to rationalise the number of systems through investment in replacement of legacy corporate systems and through modernisation of systems and applications to improve integration and provide an improved customer journey.

Cyber resilience is also a key programme, since 2017 an active Cyber Security improvement plan has been in place which details improvements required to maintain our Cyber Security resilience and to maintain standards and accreditations such as Cyber Essentials Plus and PSN Accreditation. In order to maintain the council's resilience and standards, this investment and programme of work is key. This includes investment in tools to detect and prevent malicious activity, tools, processes and resources to maintain systems to prevent vulnerabilities from exploitation, systems to enable us to share and collaborate information digitally and securely without risk of unintended exposure and ultimately damage or complete loss of any of the council's data or systems.

Investment in Regenerative Commercial Activity

- 2.12 The commercial activity undertaken in the council relates to holding properties that are utilised by tenants, these include livestock markets, caravan park, restaurant and office space. These are held primarily for their regenerative benefits to the local economy.
- 2.13 Around £240,000 in rental income is received each year.
- 2.14 The council has registered a trading company (currently dormant) that may become the vehicle that supports greater commercial activity, but any investment must evidence the following criteria:
- Support the strategic community objectives of the council.
 - Have a balanced investment approach.
 - Improve covenant strength.
 - Drive income generation and maintain yield.
- 2.15 To ensure that the council is able to benefit from the lower borrowing rates offered by the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) the council will currently not consider investing in any commercial property where yield is the primary investment driver.

Funding the Capital Strategy

- 2.16 The cost of funding the capital programme is closely monitored due to the impact on the budget and the ongoing funding constraints of the MTFs. The Council aims to minimise the cost of borrowing on the Financial Resource Model (FRM) and other sources need to be maximized such as grant funding. Funding capital from borrowing incurs extra costs from interest on the loan and the minimum revenue provision, repayment of the principal. Capital projects are prioritised where they can evidence a reduction in the cost of revenue, such as digital technologies or generate income such as building council dwellings.
- 2.17 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) supports its own capital expenditure and provision for this is included in the HRA Business Plan. The surplus on the HRA account (excess of rental income over expenditure) is used to fund capital expenditure. This does not impact on the Council Fund. Although the HRA operates separately from the Council Fund, the Council does not borrow separately for Council Fund and HRA expenditure, all borrowing is combined, and the costs apportioned to the two funds based on the level of expenditure funded from borrowing for the two funds. The apportionment method is kept under review to ensure that it remains the most equitable method.

The Capital programme detailed at Appendix A, sets out how the programme is funded, the sources are explained below:

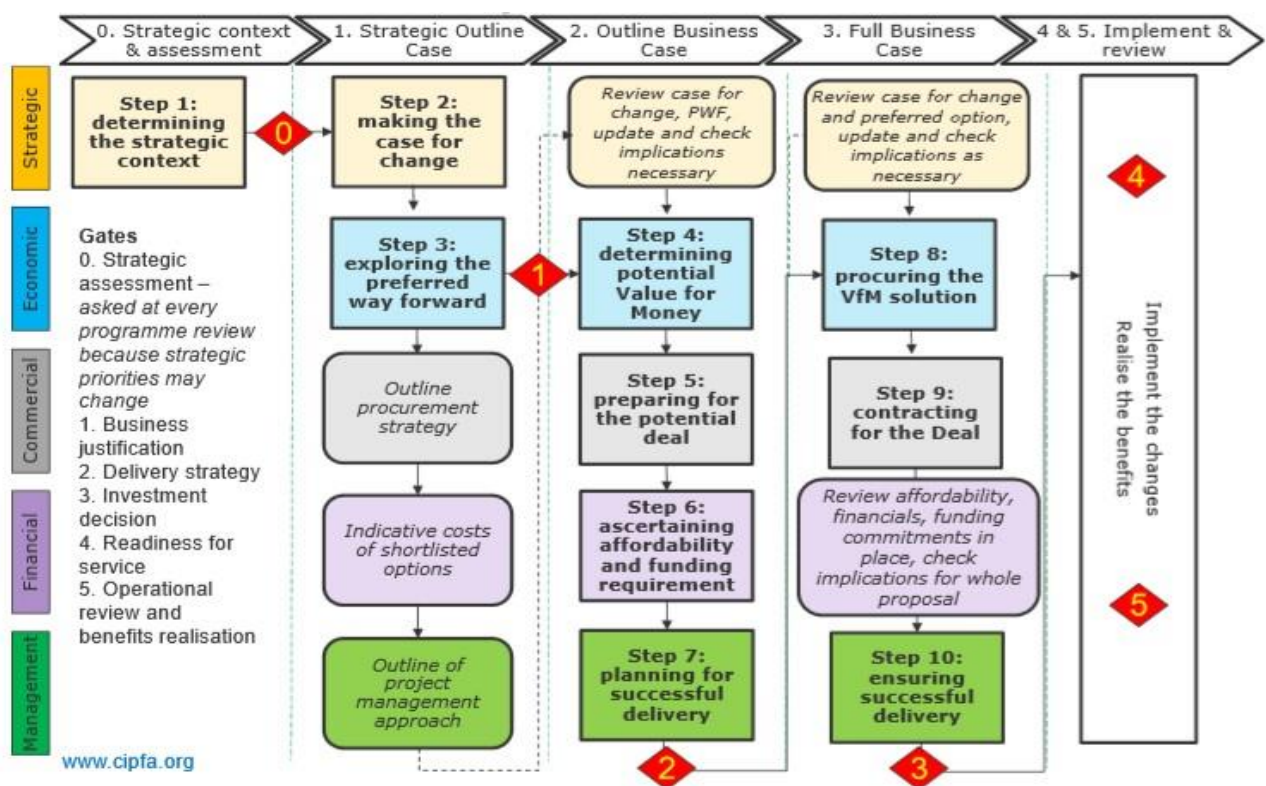
- **General Capital Grant** – This is a sum of money which is provided by the Welsh Government as part of the annual settlement. The Council is free to use the capital grant on any capital project it wishes.
- **Supported Borrowing** – The Council will borrow from establishments including the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) to fund the expenditure. The revenue costs arising from the borrowing (Interest Costs and Minimum Revenue Provision) are funded by the Welsh Government through the annual revenue settlement, hence the term “Supported Borrowing”.
- **Unsupported Borrowing** – Again, the Council borrows the funding but is required to finance the revenue costs from its own resources. Projects funded by means of unsupported borrowing tend to be projects which deliver revenue savings, and these savings contribute to meet the additional revenue costs arising from the borrowing.
- **Specific Capital Grants** – The Council will be awarded capital grants which partly or fully fund the cost of a project. Capital grants usually come with restrictions surrounding the expenditure which can be funded and by when the expenditure must be incurred.

- **Revenue Contribution** – Services can contribute from their revenue budgets to fund projects. These contributions tend to be as a match funding to a project which is mainly funded from a specific capital grant.
- **Capital Receipts** – The funds generated from the sale of assets can be used to contribute to the funding of the capital programme. These are usually generated from the sale of surplus assets (normally land or buildings). The Councils' Capital Receipts Policy is set out in Appendix B.
- **Reserves** – Funding held in reserve, e.g., unapplied capital receipts, can be used to support the capital programme. Specific reserves can also be built up and set aside for this purpose.

2.18 An asset review is underway to review each property to understand the benefit each asset is providing for service delivery and quantify any future capital and maintenance liabilities. This will ensure that the Council has the right asset in the right place at the right time and will ensure the effective and efficient delivery of a comprehensive range of quality services. Once this is complete, any future capital investment together with the proceeds from the sale of surplus assets will be included in the capital programme.

Governance and Approval Approach

2.19 Welsh Government have adopted the Better Business Case approach to building, reviewing, and agreeing business cases. These principles have been adopted in the Councils' Capital Governance Framework. This approach introduces a more formal regime to follow and ensures consistency and a robust approach to developing each project. The diagram below sets out the gates and steps necessary to develop a capital from proposal through to a successful delivery. There has been an urgency in adopting this new regime to evidence stronger governance based on robust business cases from services.



2.20 The governance of this Capital Strategy follows the same process as the Revenue Budget Setting Process and is presented to the Cabinet as part of the MTFs which is then recommended to full Council for approval.

2.21 The three stages of the Governance Framework are:

- **Stage 1 - The Strategic Outline Case (SOC)**, these must be completed for the new bids and have necessary approval.
- **Stage 2** - Once the SOC is approved, managers will need to complete more detailed work, particularly on the economics of the case, finances (detailed costings) and submit the **Outline Business Case (OBC)** for approval through the Strategic Asset Board, who provide challenge and then make recommendation to EMT / Cabinet to approve.
- **Stage 3 - The Final Business Case (FBC)** is the final gateway, and the project would move to the procurement stage. At this point the tender price for the project would be known and the risks quantified. Only when the FBC becomes a live project does the capital budget get allocated, which will improve our budget forecasting and profiling. Any revenue contributions including MRP costs would need to be built into the budget at stage 3.
 - For business cases between £75k and £1m a less formal business justification case will be used, being simpler and quicker to develop and proceed to project.
 - Each year there is a small bids programme funded by an allocation in the Capital Programme for capital projects under £75k, these are dealt with through the Strategic Asset Board.
 - The Council is moving away from an annual capital cycle and using the new framework will have an ongoing process of projects in development through to approval through Cabinet and Council as needed with the necessary prudential indicators updated and presented.

2.22 As a significant part of the capital programme and future ambitions covers investment in the Council's school's estate. The Schools Capital Programmes Oversight Board is in place which will strengthen Council's oversight of all school capital projects and provide additional scrutiny and assurance.

Capital Programme 2022-2027

2.23 The overall capital programme for the Council in 2022/23 is £88.88 million, which includes £25.55 million for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Appendix A provides a full list of all the schemes.

2.24 The General Fund includes schemes which have previously been approved or are in progress and expected to continue into future years. These total £63.33 million. The programme includes a list of schemes that have had their Strategic Outline Case approved and have been progressed to Outline Business case. Providing the economic and financial justification stacks up these schemes are likely to develop to Final Business Case stage and become live projects, totalling £6.84 million. Split over two years, £5.55 million in 2022/23, £0.75 million in 2023/24 and £0.54 million in 2024/25. An initial annual allocation of £2.00 million starting in 2022-23 has been included as the Council's contribution towards the Mid Wales Growth Deal. As the plans for the deal develop, the funding will be released to the relevant projects on completion of the relevant governance and approval processes.

2.25 The need to maintain the highways infrastructure through the HAMP has been highlighted at strategic level as a critical area of the council's long-term strategy. The programme now includes £5.00 million per annum for the HAMP and an additional £1.00 million per annum for street lighting column upgrades.

2.26 Overall additional borrowing requirements are estimated at £42.86 million in 2022/23 which includes £12.88 million for the HRA. However, it is likely that this figure will be less based on previous years slippage on spend and grants that are received in year.

2.27 The capital programme remains within budget for 2022/23 however additional revenue funding will need to be identified to fund investment in future years. The impact of the capital programme is set out through the following prudential indicators:

Capital Prudential Indicators

2.28 The Council's capital expenditure plans are the key driver of treasury management activity. The output of the capital expenditure plans is reflected in the prudential indicators, which are designed to assist members' overview and confirm capital expenditure plans.

Capital Expenditure

2.29 This prudential indicator is a summary of the Council's capital expenditure plans, both those agreed previously, and those forming part of this budget cycle.

£'m	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Non-HRA	70.97	63.33	66.53	51.63	32.42	19.96
HRA	25.21	25.55	33.12	33.43	23.64	21.75
Total	96.18	88.88	99.65	85.06	56.06	41.71

2.30 **Other long-term liabilities** - The financing need set out in the table above excludes other long-term liabilities, such as leasing arrangements that already include borrowing instruments.

2.31 The table below summarises the above capital expenditure plans and how these plans are being financed by capital or revenue resources. Any shortfall of resources results in a requirement to fund through borrowing, this figure is shown as the net financing need.

£'m	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Capital receipts	4.27	2.25	3.25	2.25	1.25	1.25
Capital grants	38.72	32.67	48.62	36.78	15.61	13.43
Revenue/Reserves	15.69	11.10	7.99	11.35	9.86	8.80
Net financing need for the year	37.50	42.86	39.79	34.68	29.34	18.23

The Council's Borrowing Need (the Capital Financing Requirement)

2.32 This is the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR is simply the total historic outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources. It is essentially a measure of the Council's indebtedness and so its underlying borrowing need. Any capital expenditure which has not immediately been paid for through a revenue or capital resource, will increase the CFR.

2.33 The CFR does not increase indefinitely, as the minimum revenue provision (MRP) is a statutory annual revenue charge which broadly reduces the indebtedness in line with each asset life, and so charges the economic consumption of capital assets as they are used.

2.34 The greater the CFR the larger the impact will be on the revenue budget, therefore in the long-term there will be a need to keep capital expenditure funded by borrowing at a level below the MRP budget in order to maintain the revenue budget at a sustainable level.

2.35 The Council is asked to approve the CFR projections below:

£'m	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
CFR – non HRA	323.53	349.71	364.61	373.44	385.20	387.28
CFR – HRA	106.83	118.63	137.80	156.93	166.88	174.68
Total CFR	430.36	468.34	502.41	530.37	552.08	561.96
Movement in CFR	33.26	37.98	34.07	27.96	21.71	9.88
Net financing need for the year (above)	37.50	42.86	39.79	34.68	29.34	18.23
Less MRP/VRP and other financing movements	4.24	4.88	5.72	6.72	7.64	8.35
Movement in CFR	33.26	37.98	34.07	27.96	21.70	9.88

Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement

2.36 MRP is an annual charge that Councils are required to pay for their debt liability in respect of capital expenditure funded by borrowing, for both the general fund and the Housing Revenue Account debt. This capital expenditure is set out as part of the CFR calculation and updated regularly to reflect borrowing need changes and the resultant costs; it is important to ensure that the debt is repaid over a period commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefit.

2.37 The debt repayment is a revenue charge, the minimum revenue provision (MRP), although additional voluntary payments are allowed if required voluntary revenue provision (VRP).

2.38 Welsh Government regulations have been issued which require the Council to approve the **MRP Statement** in advance of each year. A variety of options are provided to councils, so long as there is a prudent provision set out.

2.39 Recommendation - The Council is recommended to approve the following MRP Statement for the 2022/23 financial year:

- For capital expenditure incurred before 1 April 2020 or which in the future will be Supported Capital Expenditure, the MRP policy will be:
 - To calculate the MRP over a 50 year life on an on annuity basis using the Authority's average rate of borrowing.
- From 1 April 2020 for all unsupported borrowing (including PFI and finance leases), the MRP policy is:
 - To charge MRP over the weighted average asset life on an annuity basis using the Authority's average rate of borrowing.
- For HRA Historic and Settlement Debt, the MRP policy will be:
 - To calculate the MRP over a 60 year life on an on annuity basis using the Authority's average rate of borrowing.
- For HRA Post Settlement Debt, the MRP policy will be:

- To calculate the MRP over a weighted average asset life on an on annuity basis using the Authority's average rate of borrowing.
- Repayments included in annual PFI or finance leases are applied as MRP.
- In addition, the guidance allows for MRP to be deferred for assets under construction and this part of the guidance is adopted because the asset is not used by the authority until it is operational and therefore the MRP will match the life of the asset.
- 2.40 **MRP Overpayments** - A change introduced by the revised Welsh Government MRP Guidance was the allowance that any charges made over the statutory minimum revenue provision (MRP), voluntary revenue provision (VRP) or overpayments, can, if needed, be reclaimed in later years if deemed necessary or prudent. In order for these sums to be reclaimed for use in the budget, this policy must disclose the cumulative overpayment made each year. At the 31st of March 2021 the total balance of previous voluntary revenue provision (VRP) stands at £7.11 million, of which £1.41 million relates to the HRA. There is no intention to reclaim any of this at this point.

Risk Management

- 2.41 All large capital projects are managed under the Council's Project Management Methodology, which incorporates risk identification and risk management. The Council also has a Risk Management Policy which is applied to all its projects and activities.
- 2.42 For all capital projects, project managers update financial forecasts on a monthly basis identifying any areas subject to risk of overspend, underspend or slippage.
- 2.43 There is also a degree of funding risk in the Capital Programme, reliant as it is on future capital receipts, and the ability to be able to afford borrowing if necessary. These risks need to be managed and monitored on a regular basis, and action taken where necessary.
- 2.44 Risk appetite in this context is the level of risk that the Council is prepared to accept to be exposed to at any point in time in relation to its activities. It involves knowing what risks the Council wishes to avoid, what risks it is willing to accept and what risks it is willing and able to manage (including by transferring them to a third party, e.g., through insurance).
- 2.45 The risks are regularly monitored and managed both financially and operationally in accordance with council processes.
- 2.46 The Council is willing to accept the risks set out in this Strategy for projects that have Council approval provided that the project management ensures the appropriate mitigations are put in place to bring the project within acceptable risks margins.
- 2.47 The key financial risks inherent in the Council's Capital Programme include:

Description of Risk	Potential Impact
The longer a project takes to come to fruition, the greater the risk that the financial cost of the project will have increased, both due to the additional staff time spent on the project and the inflationary impact on the costs involved in bringing the asset into operation.	May result in financial pressures on the other projects/ programmes and service delivery.
There is a degree of correlation between the length of time a project spends in the feasibility and development stage and an increased risk of project failure or abandonment. Should a project fail for any reason, the regulations require all capital costs to be returned to revenue, which may create significant pressures, depending on the level of spend at that point.	May result in additional revenue pressures on delivery/services.

Description of Risk (cont.)	Potential Impact (cont.)
<p>Project expenditure is higher than forecast estimates – in the current climate due to the rising cost of materials and access to skilled contractors in a limited labour market</p>	<p>May result in increased financial pressures/ limitations on future investment options.</p>
<p>Once a project has been delivered successfully the cash expended is then bound in the asset. In the case of the assets that are for service delivery and do not generate a rental income stream, the money invested in the asset is only recovered if and when the asset is sold at a future date. This carries inherent financial risks in that the asset may have decreased in value, depending on market conditions, or may not have increased in value sufficiently to mitigate the effects of inflation.</p>	<p>May result in increased financial pressures/limitations on future investment options.</p>

Treasury Management Strategy

Background

- 3.1 The Council is required to operate a balanced budget which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned with cash being available when it is needed.
- 3.2 The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer-term cash involves arranging short or long-term loans or using longer-term cash flow surpluses.
- 3.3 The contribution the treasury management function makes to the authority is critical as the balance of debt and investment operations ensure liquidity or the ability to meet spending commitments as they fall due, either on day-to-day revenue or for larger capital projects.
- 3.4 Whilst any commercial initiatives or loans to third parties will impact on the treasury function, these activities are generally classed as non-treasury activities as they usually arise from capital expenditure and are separate from the day-to-day treasury management activities. The IRFS 16 Leases accounting standard will from April 2022 require leases in, with the exception of low value and short term leases to be included on the balance sheet. These arrangements are not included in this report.

Current portfolio position

- 3.5 The overall treasury management portfolio as at 31st March 2021 and the estimated position as at 31st March 2022 are shown below for both borrowing and investments.

Treasury Portfolio				
	Actual 31st March 2021		Estimate 31st March 2022	
	£'m	%	£'m	%
Borrowing				
PWLB	238.20	3.8%	260.64	3.5%
LOBO Loans	25.00	4.4%	25.00	4.2%
Market/Other Local Authorities	45.00	2.4%	40.00	2.4%
Welsh Government	33.00	0.0%	33.00	0.0%
Other	21.40	0.2%	10.98	0.4%
Total External Borrowing	362.61		369.62	
Investments				
Banks (deposit accounts)	54.38	0.1%	40.00	0.1%
Other Local Authorities	0.00	0.0%	0.00	0.0%
Total Investments	54.38		40.00	
Net Position	308.23		329.62	

Borrowing Strategy

3.6 The Council is currently maintaining an under-borrowed position. This means that the capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement), has not been fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure. This strategy is prudent as investment returns are low and counterparty risk is still an issue that needs to be considered.

3.7 Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution will be adopted with the 2022/23 treasury operations. The Head of Financial Services will monitor interest rates in financial markets and adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances:

- if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp fall in borrowing rates, (e.g., due to a marked increase of risks around relapse into recession or of risks of deflation), then borrowing will be postponed.
- if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a much sharper rise in borrowing rates than that currently forecast, perhaps arising from an acceleration in the rate of increase in central rates in the USA and UK, an increase in world economic activity, or a sudden increase in inflation risks, then the portfolio position will be re-appraised. Most likely, fixed rate funding will be drawn whilst interest rates are lower than they are projected to be in the next few years.

3.8 Any decisions will be reported to the appropriate decision making body at the next available opportunity.

3.9 Policy on Borrowing in Advance of Need

3.10 The Council will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be within forward approved Capital Financing Requirement estimates and will be considered carefully to ensure that value for money can be demonstrated and that the Council can ensure the security of such funds.

3.11 Risks associated with any borrowing in advance activity will be subject to prior appraisal and subsequent reporting through the mid-year or annual reporting mechanism.

3.12 Debt rescheduling

3.13 Rescheduling of current borrowing in our debt portfolio is unlikely to occur as the 100 basis points (1%) increase in PWLB rates only applied to new borrowing rates and not to premature debt repayment rates. If rescheduling was done, it will be reported to the Cabinet at the earliest meeting following its action.

3.14 New Financial Institutions as a source of Borrowing and / or types of Borrowing

Currently the PWLB Certainty Rate is set at gilts + 80 basis points for both HRA and non-HRA borrowing. However, consideration may still need to be given to sourcing funding from the following sources for the following reasons:

- Local authorities (primarily shorter dated maturities out to 3 years or so – still cheaper than the Certainty Rate).
- Financial institutions (primarily insurance companies and pension funds but also some banks, out of forward dates where the objective is to avoid a "cost of carry" or to achieve refinancing certainty over the next few years)
- Municipal Bonds Agency (possibly still a viable alternative depending on market circumstances prevailing at the time).

Our advisors will keep us informed as to the relative merits of each of these alternative funding sources.

3.15 Approved Sources of Long and Short term Borrowing

On Balance Sheet	Fixed	Variable
PWLB	●	●
Municipal bond agency	●	●
Local authorities	●	●
Banks	●	●
Pension funds	●	●
Insurance companies	●	●
Market (long-term)	●	●
Market (temporary)	●	●
Market (LOBOs)	●	●
Stock issues	●	●
Local temporary	●	●
Local Bonds	●	●
Local authority bills	●	●
Overdraft	●	●
Negotiable Bonds	●	●
Internal (capital receipts & revenue balances)	●	●
Commercial Paper	●	●
Medium Term Notes	●	●
Finance leases	●	●

Capital Prudential and Treasury Indicators

3.16 The Council's capital expenditure plans are the key driver of treasury management activity. The output of the capital expenditure plans is reflected in the prudential indicators, which are designed to assist members' overview and confirm capital expenditure plans.

Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream

3.17 This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital, (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income), against the net revenue budget or HRA rental income (net revenue stream). The estimates of financing costs include current commitments and the proposals in this budget report. The future net revenue streams are estimated based on worst case scenarios.

£'m	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Financing Costs	10.85	11.29	12.17	12.85	13.53	13.94
Net Revenue Stream	279.81	302.33	314.29	324.37	333.90	343.77
Council Fund	3.9%	3.7%	3.9%	4.0%	4.1%	4.1%
Financing Costs	4.53	4.89	5.49	6.21	6.76	7.13
Net Revenue Stream	26.65	27.38	28.65	30.07	31.49	32.83
HRA	17.0%	17.9%	19.1%	20.7%	21.5%	21.7%

Maturity structure of borrowing

3.18 These gross limits are set to reduce the Council's exposure to large, fixed rate sums falling due for refinancing and are required for upper and lower limits.

3.19 The Council is asked to approve the following treasury indicators and limits:

Maturity structure of borrowing 2022/23		
	Lower	Upper
Under 12 months	0%	40%
12 months to 2 years	0%	40%
2 years to 5 years	0%	40%
5 years to 10 years	0%	40%
10 years to 20 years	0%	40%
20 years to 30 years	0%	40%
30 years to 40 years	0%	40%
40 years to 50 years	0%	40%
50 years to 60 years	0%	40%

3.20 Affordability prudential indicators

3.21 Prudential indicators are required to assess the affordability of the capital investment plans. These provide an indication of the impact of the capital investment plans on the Council's overall finances. The Council is asked to approve the following borrowing indicators:

3.22 Borrowing Indicators

3.23 The capital expenditure plans set out in the capital strategy provide details of the service activity of the Council. The treasury management function ensures that the Council's cash is organised in accordance with the relevant professional codes, so that sufficient cash is available to meet this service activity and the Council's capital strategy. This will involve both the organisation of the cash flow and, where capital plans require, the organisation of appropriate borrowing facilities. The strategy covers the relevant treasury / prudential indicators, the current and projected debt positions and the annual investment strategy.

3.24 The Council's forward projections for borrowing are summarised below. The table shows the actual external debt, against the underlying capital borrowing need, (the Capital Financing Requirement - CFR), highlighting any over or under borrowing.

Change in External Debt

£'m	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Council Fund						
Debt at 1st April	263.83	289.04	315.22	330.12	338.95	350.70
Expected change in Debt	25.21	26.18	14.90	8.83	11.75	2.08
Estimated Gross Debt at 31st March	289.04	315.22	330.12	338.95	350.70	352.78
CFR	323.53	349.71	364.61	373.44	385.20	387.28
Under / (Over) Borrowing	34.49	34.49	34.49	34.49	34.50	34.50
HRA						
Debt at 1st April	98.78	106.83	118.63	137.80	156.93	166.88
Expected change in Debt	8.05	11.80	19.17	19.13	9.95	7.80
Estimated Gross Debt at 31st March	106.83	118.63	137.80	156.93	166.88	174.68
CFR	106.83	118.63	137.80	156.93	166.88	174.68

3.25 Within the range of prudential indicators there are a number of key indicators to ensure that the Council operates its activities within well-defined limits. One of these is that the Council needs to ensure that its gross debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2022/23 and the following two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years but ensures that borrowing is not undertaken for revenue or speculative purposes.

3.26 The Head of Financial Services reports that the Council complied with this prudential indicator in the current year and does not envisage difficulties for the next few years. This view considers current commitments, existing plans, and the proposals in this budget report. The projected increase in the CFR over the medium and longer term must be reviewed annually to ensure that the capital investment plans remain affordable, prudent and sustainable.

3.27 Treasury Indicators: limits to borrowing activity

Operational Boundary

3.28 The Operational Boundary is the limit beyond which external debt is not normally expected to exceed. In most cases, this would be a similar figure to the CFR, but may be lower or higher depending on the levels of actual debt and the ability to fund under-borrowing by other cash resources.

£'m	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Operational Boundary	478.00	512.00	541.00	563.00	573.00

Authorised Limit

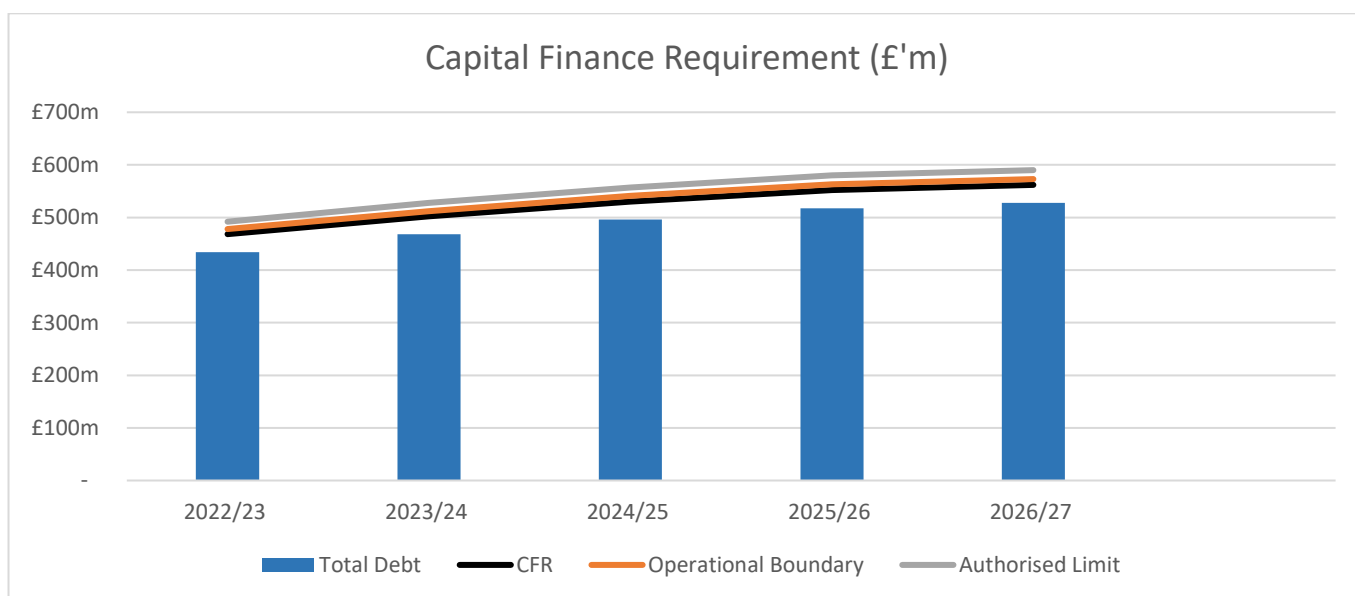
3.29 This is a key prudential indicator and represents a control on the maximum level of borrowing. This represents a legal limit beyond which external debt is prohibited, and this limit needs to be set or revised by the full Council. It reflects the level of external debt which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term.

3.30 This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003. The Government retains an option to control either the total of all councils' plans, or those of a specific council, although this power has not yet been exercised.

3.31 The Council is asked to approve the following authorised limit.

£'m	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Authorised Limit	492.00	528.00	557.00	580.00	590.00

3.32 The chart below shows the relationship between the Total Debt, the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), the Operational Boundary and Authorised Limit.



Annual Investment Policy

3.33 **Management of risk** - The Welsh Government and CIPFA have extended the meaning of 'investments' to include both financial and non-financial investments. This strategy deals solely with financial investments, (as managed by the treasury management team). Nonfinancial investments, essentially the purchase of income yielding assets, are covered in the Capital Strategy.

The Council's investment policy has regard to the following.

- Welsh Government's Guidance on Local Government Investments 2019 ("the Guidance")
- CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes 2017 ("the Code")
- CIPFA Treasury Management Guidance Notes 2018

The Council's investment priorities will be security first, portfolio liquidity second and then yield, (return). The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity and with the Council's risk appetite. In the current economic climate, it is considered appropriate to keep investments short term to cover cash flow needs

3.34 The above guidance from the Welsh Government and CIPFA place a high priority on the management of risk. This authority has adopted a prudent approach to managing risk and defines its risk appetite by the following means:

- Minimum acceptable credit criteria are applied in order to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties. This also enables diversification and thus avoidance of concentration risk. The key ratings used to monitor counterparties are the short term and long-term ratings.
- Other information: ratings will not be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution; it is important to continually assess and monitor the financial sector on both a micro and macro basis and in relation to the economic and political environments in which institutions operate. The assessment will also take account of information that reflects the opinion of the markets. To achieve this consideration the Council will engage with its advisors to maintain a monitor on market pricing such as “credit default swaps” and overlay that information on top of the credit ratings.
- Other information sources used will include the financial press, share price and other such information pertaining to the financial sector in order to establish the most robust scrutiny process on the suitability of potential investment counterparties.
- This authority has defined the list of types of investment instruments that the treasury management team are authorised to use. There are categories of ‘specified’ and ‘non-specified’ investments.
 - **Specified investments** are those with a high level of credit quality and subject to a maturity limit of one year except deposits with local authorities which can be for any period.
 - **Non-specified investments** are those with less high credit quality, may be for periods in excess of one year, and/or are more complex instruments which require greater consideration by members and officers before being authorised for use. Once an investment is classed as non-specified, it remains non-specified all the way through to maturity i.e., an 18 month deposit would still be non-specified even if it has only 11 months left until maturity.
- Lending limits (amounts and maturity), for each counterparty will be set in conjunction with Link’s matrices.
- This authority will set a limit for the amount of its investments which are invested for longer than 365 days.
- Investments will only be placed with counterparties from countries with a specified minimum sovereign rating.
- All investments will be denominated in sterling.
- As a result of the change in accounting standards for 2020/21 under IFRS 9, this authority will consider the implications of investment instruments which could result in an adverse movement in the value of the amount invested and resultant charges at the end of the year to the General Fund. The Welsh Government has passed a statutory override to allow Welsh local authorities time to adjust their portfolio of all pooled investments by delaying implementation of IFRS 9 for five years until 31st March 2023.

3.35 The council will also pursue value for money in treasury management and will monitor the yield from investment income against appropriate benchmarks for investment performance.

3.36 Creditworthiness policy

3.37 This Council applies the creditworthiness service provided by Link Asset Services. This service employs a sophisticated modelling approach, utilising credit ratings from the three main credit rating agencies - Fitch, Moody’s and Standard & Poor’s. The credit ratings of counterparties are supplemented with the following overlays:

- “watches” and “outlooks” from credit rating agencies.
- CDS spreads that may give early warning of likely changes in credit ratings.
- sovereign ratings to select counterparties from only the most creditworthy countries.

3.38 This modelling approach combines credit ratings, and any assigned Watches and Outlooks in a weighted scoring system which is then combined with an overlay of CDS spreads. The end product of this is a series of colour coded bands which indicate the relative creditworthiness of counterparties. These colour codes are used by the Council to determine the suggested duration for investments. The Council will, therefore, use counterparties within the following durational bands:

Yellow	5 years *
Dark pink	5 years for Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit score of 1.25
Light pink	5 years for Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit score of 1.5
Purple	2 years
Blue	1 year (only applies to nationalised or semi nationalised UK Banks)
Orange	1 year
Red	6 months
Green	100 days
No colour	not to be used

Please note: the yellow colour category is for UK Government debt, or its equivalent, money market funds and collateralised deposits where the collateral is UK Government debt.

Please note: "fund" ratings are different to individual counterparty ratings, coming under either specific "MMF" or "Bond Fund" rating criteria.

3.39 The Link Asset Services' creditworthiness service uses a wider array of information other than just primary ratings. Furthermore, by using a risk weighted scoring system, it does not give undue preponderance to just one agency's ratings.

3.40 Typically, the minimum credit ratings criteria the Council use will be a short term rating (Fitch or equivalents) of F1 and a long term rating of A-. There may be occasions when the counterparty ratings from one rating agency are marginally lower than these ratings but may still be used. In these instances, consideration will be given to the whole range of ratings available, or other topical market information, to support their use.

3.41 Credit ratings will be monitored daily through use of the Link Group's creditworthiness service.

- If a downgrade results in the counterparty / investment scheme no longer meeting the Council's minimum criteria, its further use as a new investment will be withdrawn immediately.
- In addition to the use of credit ratings the Council will be advised of information in movements in Credit Default Swap spreads against the iTraxx European Financials benchmark and other market data on a daily basis via its Passport website, provided exclusively to it by Link Asset Services. Extreme market movements may result in downgrade of an institution or removal from the Council's lending list.

3.42 Sole reliance will not be placed on the use of this external service. In addition, this Council will also use market data and market information, as well as information on any external support for banks to help support its decision making process.

3.43 Significant levels of downgrades to Short- and Long-Term credit ratings have not materialised since the crisis in March 2020. In the main, where they did change, any alterations were limited to Outlooks. However, as economies are beginning to reopen, there have been some instances of previous lowering of Outlooks being reversed.

3.44 Although bank CDS prices, (these are market indicators of credit risk), spiked upwards at the end of March / early April 2020 due to the heightened market uncertainty and ensuing liquidity crisis that affected financial markets, they have returned to more average levels since then. However, sentiment can easily shift, so it will remain important to undertake continual monitoring of all aspects of risk and return in the current circumstances. Link monitor CDS prices as part of their creditworthiness service to local authorities and the Council has access to this information via its Link-provided Passport portal.

3.45 Country limits

3.46 Due care will be taken to consider the exposure of the Council's total investment portfolio to non-specified investments, countries, groups and sectors.

3.47 The Council has determined that it will only use approved counterparties from the UK and from countries with a minimum sovereign credit rating of AA- from Fitch. The list of countries that qualify using this credit criteria as at the date of this report are shown in paragraph 3.63. This list will be added to, or deducted from, by officers should ratings change in accordance with this policy.

3.48 Investment strategy

3.49 **In-house funds** - Investments will be made with reference to the core balance and cash flow requirements and the outlook for short-term interest rates (i.e., rates for investments up to 12 months). Greater returns are usually obtainable by investing for longer periods. While most cash balances are required in order to manage the ups and downs of cash flow, where cash sums can be identified that could be invested for longer periods, the value to be obtained from longer term investments will be carefully assessed.

- If it is thought that Bank Rate is likely to rise significantly within the time horizon being considered, then consideration will be given to keeping most investments as being short term or variable.
- Conversely, if it is thought that Bank Rate is likely to fall within that time period, consideration will be given to locking in higher rates currently obtainable, for longer periods.

3.50 Investment returns expectations

3.51 The suggested budgeted investment earnings rates provided by Link Group for returns on investments placed or periods up to about three months during each financial year are as follows:

2022/23	0.50%
2023/24	0.75%
2024/25	1.00%
2025/26	1.25%
Later years	2.00%

3.52 Investment treasury indicator and limit

3.53 The Investment treasury indicator and limit - total principal funds invested for greater than 365 days. These limits are set with regard to the Council's liquidity requirements and to reduce the need for early sale of an investment and are based on the availability of funds after each yearend.

3.54 The Council is asked to approve the following treasury indicator and limit:

Upper limit for principal sums invested for longer than 365 days			
£m	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Principal sums invested for longer than 365 days	£10m	£10m	£10m
Current investments as at 31.12.21 in excess of 1 year maturing in each year	Nil	Nil	Nil

- 3.55 For its cash flow generated balances, the Council will seek to utilise its business reserve instant access accounts, money market funds and short-dated deposits.
- 3.56 **Investment performance / risk benchmarking** – This Council will use an investment benchmark to assess the investment performance of its investment portfolio of overnight, 7 day, 1, 3, 6 or 12 month compounded / SONIA.
- 3.57 Treasury Management Practice – Credit and Counterparty Risk Management
- 3.58 Specified Investments - All such investments will be sterling denominated with maturities up to maximum of 1 year (except for deposits with local authorities which can be for any period), meeting the minimum 'high' quality criteria where applicable. (If a deposit is made for say 2 years, it starts as being a non-specified investment and remains as a non-specified investment even when it's time to maturity falls under 12 months). The criteria, time limits and monetary limits applying to institutions or investment vehicles are.

Institution	Maximum Investment per Group/Institution	Maximum Length	Credit Rating/Other Assessment of Risk
UK Banks	£40m	Up to 364 days	As per Link's matrices
Foreign Banks	£5m	Up to 364 days	As per Link's matrices
Other Local Authorities	£25m	Up to 5 years	N/A

- 3.59 **Non specified Investments** - These are any investments which do not meet the specified investment criteria. A variety of investment instruments will be used, subject to the credit quality of the institution, and depending on the type of investment made, it will fall into one of the above categories. The criteria, time limits and monetary limits applying to institutions or investment vehicles are:

Institution	Maximum Investment per Group/Institution	Maximum Length	Credit Rating/Other Assessment of Risk
UK Banks	£10m (£5m limit with any one institution)	Up to 2 years	As per Link's matrices
Foreign Banks	£2m	Up to 2 years	As per Link's matrices
Money Market Funds (max. of 5)	£10m	N/A	All are AAA rated
Other Local Authorities	£10m	Up to 5 years	N/A
<i>Note: Limits for Specified and Non-Specified are combined limits. The maximum limit will also apply to a banking group as a whole.</i>			

- 3.60 In addition to treasury management investment activity, local authorities can utilise their powers to borrow in order to invest in other financial assets. Such activity includes loans supporting service

outcomes, investment in or loans to subsidiaries, and investment property portfolios primarily for a financial return. Whilst these impact on treasury management activity, they are managed outside of this Treasury Management Strategy and approved separately as part of the Council's Capital expenditure plans arising from its Capital Strategy. Regulator concerns in relation to the extent of this activity have resulted in recent updates to CIPFA professional Codes of Practice including the Treasury Management Code. Whilst no national monetary, financial, or other controls or limits are in place currently, regulations have been updated to ensure the risks and implications of such activities are clearly governed and understood over a long term period.

3.61 Approved Countries for Investments

3.62 This list is based on those countries which have sovereign ratings of AA- or higher, (we show the lowest rating from Fitch, Moody's, and S&P) and also, (except - at the time of writing - for Hong Kong, Norway and Luxembourg), have banks operating in sterling markets which have credit ratings of green or above in the Link Asset Services credit worthiness service.

3.63 Based on lowest available rating

➤ **AAA**

Australia	Denmark
Germany	Luxembourg
Netherlands	Norway
Singapore	Sweden
Switzerland	

➤ **AA+**

Canada	U.S.A.
Finland	

➤ **AA**

Abu Dhabi (UAE)	France
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➤ **AA-**

Belgium	Hong Kong
Qatar	U.K.

3.64 **Prospect for Interest rates** - The Council has appointed Link Asset Services as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates, their latest update is provided at Appendix C and D.

Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation

3.65 The governance of the key decisions is set out below:

➤ **Full Council**

- approval of annual strategy

➤ **Audit Committee**

- reviewing the treasury management policy and procedures and making recommendations to the responsible body.

➤ **Cabinet**

- receiving and reviewing reports on treasury management policies, practices and activities
- approval of amendments to the Authority's adopted clauses, treasury management policy statement and treasury management practices
- budget consideration and approval
- approval of the division of responsibilities
- receiving and reviewing regular monitoring reports and acting on recommendations
- approving the selection of external service providers.

The Treasury Management Role of the Section 151 Officer

3.66 The role of the section 151 officer is set out below:

- recommending clauses, treasury management policy/practices for approval, reviewing the same regularly, and monitoring compliance
- submitting regular treasury management policy reports
- submitting budgets and budget variations
- receiving and reviewing management information reports
- reviewing the performance of the treasury management function
- ensuring the adequacy of treasury management resources and skills, and the effective division of responsibilities within the treasury management function
- ensuring the adequacy of internal audit, and liaising with external audit
- recommending the appointment of external service providers.

3.67 The above list of specific responsibilities of the S151 officer in the 2017 Treasury Management Code has not changed. However, implicit in the changes in both codes, is a major extension of the functions of this role:

- preparation of a capital strategy to include capital expenditure, capital financing, and treasury management, with a long term timeframe (say 20+ years – to be determined in accordance with local priorities).
- ensuring that the capital strategy is prudent, sustainable, affordable and prudent in the long term and provides value for money.
- ensuring that due diligence has been carried out on all investments and is in accordance with the risk appetite of the authority.

Appendix A - Capital Programme 2022/27

	2021-22 £'m	2022-23 £'m	2023-24 £'m	2024-25 £'m	2025-26 £'m	2026-27 £'m	Total £'m
Education							
Ysgol Bro Hyddgen	0.835	2.488	15.543	16.708	11.000		46.574
Welshpool C in W School	0.050						0.050
Ysgol Gymraeg y Trallwng	3.374	4.961	0.125				8.460
Ysgol Brynllwarch	0.602	1.500	3.048	3.497			8.647
Ysgol Cedewain	0.700	15.090	6.482				22.272
Other 21st Century School Schemes	2.121	0.544	9.610	11.487	4.500	4.000	32.262
Schools Major Improvements	5.723	3.285	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	13.008
Schools Other	0.209						0.209
Child Care Grant	2.859						2.859
	16.472	27.868	35.808	32.692	16.500	5.000	134.340
Highways, Transport and Recycling							
Integrated Transport	0.406						0.406
Highways Lighting	1.536	1.250	1.200	1.000	1.000	1.000	6.986
Highways Strengthening	2.765	0.125					2.890
Structures Strengthening	0.550	0.550	0.600	0.500	0.100	0.200	2.500
Structural Maintenance - Roads	4.910	6.500	6.500	5.000	5.000	5.000	32.910
Road Safety & Small Schemes	0.020						0.020
Salt Barns	0.029	0.030	0.750				0.809
Safe Route In Communities	0.050						0.050
Newtown De-Trunking Works	1.014						1.014
Countryside & Outdoor Recreation	0.591	0.377	0.115	0.015	0.015	0.015	1.128
Recycling	0.840	1.786					2.626
Local Transport Fund	1.155						1.155
Vehicle Replacement	9.183	2.045	1.215	5.202	3.710	2.651	24.006
Community Transport Enhancement	0.031						0.031
Major Strategic Schemes	1.549	1.500	1.500	1.500	1.500	1.500	9.049
Flood Alleviation Schemes	0.630						0.630
Active Travel Fund	2.108						2.108
	27.368	14.163	11.880	13.217	11.325	10.366	88.319

	2021-22 £'m	2022-23 £'m	2023-24 £'m	2024-25 £'m	2025-26 £'m	2026-27 £'m	Total £'m
Property, Planning and Public Protection							
Regulatory Services	0.379						0.379
Closed Landfill Sites							0.000
County Farms	0.296	0.100	0.100				0.496
Business Parks	1.861						1.861
Office Accommodation	0.775						0.775
Depots	0.075						0.075
	3.386	0.100	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.000	3.586
Housing & Community Development							
Libraries	0.097						0.097
Sports and Leisure Centres	3.127	0.714	0.842				4.683
Arts and Museums	0.088						0.088
General Fund Housing	2.362						2.362
Safe, Warm & Secure	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	1.200
Co2I	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.288
Disabled Adaptation	1.300	1.300	1.300	1.300	1.300	1.300	7.800
Enable	0.096						0.096
Landlord Loans	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	1.200
	7.519	2.462	2.590	1.748	1.748	1.748	17.815
Regeneration							
Economic Development	4.096	1.942					6.038
C.E.S.F.	0.001						0.001
Levelling Up	3.210	7.216	12.300	0.486			23.212
	7.307	9.159	12.300	0.486	0.000	0.000	29.252
Information Services							
Hwb In Schools	0.493						0.493
IT Refresh Strategy	0.330	0.230	0.390	0.350	0.350	0.350	2.000
IT Infrastructure	0.022						0.022
Switches / Wi-Fi	0.010						0.010
Other IT	0.042						0.042
Finance System	0.024						0.024
Share Point	0.015	0.070					0.085
System Rationalisation	0.140	0.065					0.205
Cyber Security Improvement	0.114	0.100	0.100	0.100			0.414
Cloud Services	0.115	0.350					0.465
Unified Communications	0.350						0.350
	1.656	0.815	0.490	0.450	0.350	0.350	4.111

	2021-22 £'m	2022-23 £'m	2023-24 £'m	2024-25 £'m	2025-26 £'m	2026-27 £'m	Total £'m
Childrens' Services							
Redevelopment Golwg y Bannau	0.060						0.060
Priory C In W Primary School	0.970						0.970
Open Door Former Oldford School	0.537						0.537
Play Opportunities Grant	0.199						0.199
	1.766	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.766
Adult Services, Commissioning							
Care Homes	0.320	0.100	0.110				0.529
Arlais/Lant Avenue	0.023						0.023
Substance Misuse Funding	0.058						0.058
Telecare	0.000	0.112					0.112
Mobile Working and Transformation		0.100					0.100
Innovative Use of Robotics		0.400					0.400
Community Equipment	0.130						0.130
Castell Y Dail, Newtown	0.098						0.098
	0.628	0.712	0.110	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.450
Corporate							
Small Capital Bids	0.000	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	2.500
Pipeline Projects	1.268	5.547	0.750	0.540			8.105
Mid Wales Growth Deal		2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	10.000
Unallocated	0.183						0.183
Transformation	3.600						3.600
	4.868	8.047	3.250	3.040	2.500	2.500	24.205
Total	70.970	63.326	66.527	51.633	32.423	19.964	304.843
Financed by							
Supported Borrowing	10.254	5.748	4.595	4.595	4.595	4.595	34.382
Prudential Borrowing	18.296	24.230	14.715	9.289	12.738	3.522	82.790
Welsh Government Grant	19.753	17.097	26.465	25.865	5.184	3.000	97.364
General Capital Grant	4.598	3.167	4.598	4.598	4.598	4.598	26.157
Other Grants	4.947	6.575	11.720	0.486			23.728
Capital Receipts	4.266	2.248	2.248	1.248	1.248	1.248	12.506
Revenue/Reserves	8.856	4.260	2.185	5.552	4.060	3.001	27.914
	70.970	63.326	66.527	51.633	32.423	19.964	304.843

	2021-22 £'m	2022-23 £'m	2023-24 £'m	2024-25 £'m	2025-26 £'m	2026-27 £'m	Total £'m
Housing Revenue Account							
Welsh Housing Quality Standard	8.216	8.852	7.018	5.645	5.693	6.646	42.070
Community Alarms		0.300	0.300				0.600
Compliance 100	0.370	0.500	0.500	0.350	0.250	0.250	2.220
Fit For Life	2.430	1.950	1.650	1.450	0.250	0.250	7.980
Green Powys	0.450	0.415	0.425	0.575	0.575	0.500	2.940
Rapid Response Fund	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.600
Love Where You Live	0.488	1.275	1.350	0.950	0.650	0.250	4.963
Enable (HRA)	0.096						0.096
Replacement Sewage Plant	0.015						0.015
Housing R&M System	0.220						0.220
Housing Vehicles		1.037					1.037
New Builds / Repurchase	12.822	11.122	21.780	24.363	16.125	13.756	99.968
	25.208	25.550	33.123	33.434	23.643	21.752	162.710
Financed by							
Prudential Borrowing	8.951	12.881	20.491	20.802	12.011	10.120	85.256
Welsh Government Grant	9.425	5.832	5.832	5.832	5.832	5.832	38.585
Capital Receipts			1.000	1.000			2.000
Revenue/Reserves	6.831	6.837	5.800	5.800	5.800	5.800	36.868
	25.208	25.550	33.123	33.434	23.643	21.752	162.710

Appendix B - Capital Receipt Policy

Introduction

This policy is introduced to provide guidance to Senior Managers on the rules governing the application of Capital Receipts in Powys County Council. This guidance has been drafted in line with the two codes of practice issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). These publications are:

- The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities
- The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting

The two publications referred to above contain guidance on capital receipts and local authority accounting that complements guidance issued by the Welsh Government.

In England and Wales, capital receipts are defined by Section 9(1) of the Local Government Act 2003 to include all instances where property, plant or equipment is disposed of for cash (subject to a £10,000 de minimis). All references to Capital Receipts in this policy therefore refers to this definition.

Application

This guidance should be read alongside any relevant direction issued by Welsh Ministers.

Use of Capital Receipts

The current policy for the use of Capital Receipts is contained in the Corporate Asset Policy.

- Capital Receipts will normally be credited to the Central Fund and will be used to progress the Council's principal objectives defined in the Corporate Improvement Plan. However, up to 4% of the capital receipt may be reclaimed by Property as permitted and approved costs of sale.
- Capital receipts from the sale of Farm or Agricultural land under the County Farm Estate and property vested in the HRA will be subject to the following apportionment:

This policy proposes the use of Capital Receipts to continue to be based on the following:

Type	Service Area	Corporate
Agricultural	0%	100%
HRA Dwellings and Land	100%	0%
Home finder receipts	100%	0%
Vehicles	100%	0%

Appendix C – Economic Background - 22nd December 2021

The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisor who have provided the following Economic Background.

COVID-19 vaccines.

These were the game changer during 2021 which raised high hopes that life in the UK would be able to largely return to normal in the second half of the year. However, the bursting onto the scene of the Omicron mutation at the end of November, rendered the initial two doses of all vaccines largely ineffective in preventing infection. This has dashed such hopes and raises the spectre again that a fourth wave of the virus could overwhelm hospitals in early 2022. What we now know is that this mutation is very fast spreading with the potential for total case numbers to double every two to three days, although it possibly may not cause so much severe illness as previous mutations. Rather than go for full lockdowns which heavily damage the economy, the government strategy this time is focusing on getting as many people as possible to have a third (booster) vaccination after three months from the previous last injection, as a booster has been shown to restore a high percentage of immunity to Omicron to those who have had two vaccinations. There is now a race on between how quickly boosters can be given to limit the spread of Omicron, and how quickly will hospitals fill up and potentially be unable to cope. In the meantime, workers have been requested to work from home and restrictions have been placed on large indoor gatherings and hospitality venues. With the household saving rate having been exceptionally high since the first lockdown in March 2020, there is plenty of pent-up demand and purchasing power stored up for services in sectors like restaurants, travel, tourism and hotels which had been hit hard during 2021, but could now be hit hard again by either, or both, of government restrictions and/or consumer reluctance to leave home. Growth will also be lower due to people being ill and not working, similar to the pingdemic in July. The economy, therefore, faces significant headwinds although some sectors have learned how to cope well with Covid. However, the biggest impact on growth would come from another lockdown if that happened. The big question still remains as to whether any further mutations of this virus could develop which render all current vaccines ineffective, as opposed to how quickly vaccines can be modified to deal with them and enhanced testing programmes be implemented to contain their spread until tweaked vaccines become widely available.

A SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF THE FUTURE PATH OF BANK RATE

- In December, the Bank of England became the first major western central bank to put interest rates up in this upswing in the current business cycle in western economies as recovery progresses from the Covid recession of 2020.
- The next increase in Bank Rate could be in February or May, dependent on how severe an impact there is from Omicron.
- If there are lockdowns in January, this could pose a barrier for the MPC to putting Bank Rate up again as early as 3rd February.
- With inflation expected to peak at around 6% in April, the MPC may want to be seen to be active in taking action to counter inflation on 5th May, the release date for its Quarterly Monetary Policy Report.
- The December 2021 MPC meeting was more concerned with combating inflation over the medium term than supporting economic growth in the short term.
- Bank Rate increases beyond May are difficult to forecast as inflation is likely to drop sharply in the second half of 2022.
- However, the MPC will want to normalise Bank Rate over the next three years so that it has its main monetary policy tool ready to use in time for the next down-turn; all rates under 2% are providing stimulus to economic growth.
- We have put year end 0.25% increases into Q1 of each financial year from 2023 to recognise this upward bias in Bank Rate - but the actual timing in each year is difficult to predict.
- Covid remains a major potential downside threat in all three years as we ARE likely to get further mutations.

- How quickly can science come up with a mutation proof vaccine, or other treatment, – and for them to be widely administered around the world?
- Purchases of gilts under QE ended in December. Note that when Bank Rate reaches 0.50%, the MPC has said it will start running down its stock of QE.

MPC MEETING 16th DECEMBER 2021

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted 8-1 to raise Bank Rate by 0.15% from 0.10% to 0.25% and unanimously decided to make no changes to its programme of quantitative easing purchases due to finish in December 2021 at a total of £895bn.
- The MPC disappointed financial markets by not raising Bank Rate at its November meeting. Until Omicron burst on the scene, most forecasters, therefore, viewed a Bank Rate increase as being near certain at this December meeting due to the way that inflationary pressures have been comprehensively building in both producer and consumer prices, and in wage rates. However, at the November meeting, the MPC decided it wanted to have assurance that the labour market would get over the end of the furlough scheme on 30th September without unemployment increasing sharply; their decision was, therefore, to wait until statistics were available to show how the economy had fared at this time.
- **On 10th December we learnt of the disappointing 0.1% m/m rise in GDP** in October which suggested that economic growth had already slowed to a crawl even before the Omicron variant was discovered in late November. Early evidence suggests growth in November might have been marginally better. Nonetheless, at such low rates of growth, the government's "Plan B" COVID-19 restrictions could cause the economy to contract in December.
- **On 14th December, the labour market statistics** for the three months to October and the single month of October were released. The fallout after the furlough scheme was smaller and shorter than the Bank of England had feared. The single-month data were more informative and showed that LFS employment fell by 240,000, unemployment increased by 75,000 and the unemployment rate rose from 3.9% in September to 4.2%. However, the weekly data suggested this didn't last long as unemployment was falling again by the end of October. What's more, the 49,700 fall in the claimant count and the 257,000 rise in the PAYE measure of company payrolls suggests that the labour market strengthened again in November. The other side of the coin was a further rise in the number of vacancies from 1.182m to a record 1.219m in the three months to November which suggests that the supply of labour is struggling to keep up with demand, although the single-month figure for November fell for the first time since February, from 1.307m to 1.227m.
- These figures by themselves, would probably have been enough to give the MPC the assurance that it could press ahead to raise Bank Rate at this December meeting. However, the advent of Omicron potentially threw a spanner into the works as it poses a major headwind to the economy which, of itself, will help to cool the economy. The financial markets, therefore, swung round to expecting no change in Bank Rate.
- **On 15th December we had the CPI inflation** figure for November which spiked up further from 4.2% to 5.1%, confirming again how inflationary pressures have been building sharply. However, Omicron also caused a sharp fall in world oil and other commodity prices; (gas and electricity inflation has generally accounted on average for about 60% of the increase in inflation in advanced western economies).
- **Other elements of inflation are also transitory** e.g., prices of goods being forced up by supply shortages, and shortages of shipping containers due to ports being clogged have caused huge increases in shipping costs. But these issues are likely to clear during 2022, and then prices will subside back to more normal levels. Gas prices and electricity prices will also fall back once winter is passed and demand for these falls away.

- Although it is possible that the Government could step in with some **fiscal support for the economy**, the huge cost of such support to date is likely to pose a barrier to incurring further major economy wide expenditure unless it is very limited and targeted on narrow sectors like hospitality, (as announced just before Christmas). The Government may well, therefore, effectively leave it to the MPC, and to monetary policy, to support economic growth – but at a time when the threat posed by rising inflation is near to peaking!
- This is the adverse set of factors against which the MPC had to decide on Bank Rate. For the second month in a row, the MPC blind-sided financial markets, this time with a **surprise increase in Bank Rate from 0.10% to 0.25%**. What's more, the hawkish tone of comments indicated that the MPC is now concerned that inflationary pressures are indeed building and need concerted action by the MPC to counter. This indicates that there will be more increases to come with financial markets predicting 1% by the end of 2022. The 8-1 vote to raise the rate shows that there is firm agreement that inflation now poses a threat, especially after the CPI figure hit a 10-year high this week. The MPC commented that “there has been significant upside news” and that “there were some signs of greater persistence in domestic costs and price pressures”.
- On the other hand, it did also comment that “**the Omicron variant is likely to weigh on near-term activity**”. But it stressed that at the November meeting it had said it would raise rates if the economy evolved as it expected and that now “these conditions had been met”. It also appeared more worried about the possible boost to inflation from Omicron itself. It said that “the current position of the global and UK economies was materially different compared with prior to the onset of the pandemic, including elevated levels of consumer price inflation”. It also noted the possibility that renewed social distancing would boost demand for goods again, (as demand for services would fall), meaning “global price pressures might persist for longer”. (Recent news is that the largest port in the world in China has come down with an Omicron outbreak which is not only affecting the port but also factories in the region.)
- On top of that, there were no references this month to inflation being expected to be below the **2% target in two years' time**, which at November's meeting the MPC referenced to suggest the markets had gone too far in expecting interest rates to rise to over 1.00% by the end of the year.
- These comments indicate that there has been a material reappraisal by the MPC of the inflationary pressures since their last meeting and the Bank also increased its forecast for inflation to peak at 6% next April, rather than at 5% as of a month ago. However, as the Bank retained its guidance that only a “**modest tightening**” in policy will be required, it cannot be thinking that it will need to increase interest rates that much more. A typical policy tightening cycle has usually involved rates rising by 0.25% four times in a year. “Modest” seems slower than that. As such, the Bank could be thinking about raising interest rates two or three times next year to 0.75% or 1.00%.
- In as much as a considerable part of the inflationary pressures at the current time are indeed **transitory**, and will naturally subside, and since economic growth is likely to be weak over the next few months, this would appear to indicate that this tightening cycle is likely to be comparatively short.
- As for the timing of the next increase in Bank Rate, the MPC dropped the comment from November's statement that Bank Rate would be raised “in the coming months”. That may imply another rise is unlikely at the next meeting in February and that May is more likely. However, much could depend on how adversely, or not, the economy is affected by Omicron in the run up to the next meeting on 3rd February. Once 0.50% is reached, the Bank would act to start shrinking its stock of QE, (gilts purchased by the Bank would not be replaced when they mature).
- **The MPC's forward guidance on its intended monetary policy** on raising Bank Rate versus selling (quantitative easing) holdings of bonds is as follows: -

- Raising Bank Rate as “the active instrument in most circumstances”.
 - Raising Bank Rate to 0.50% before starting on reducing its holdings.
 - Once Bank Rate is at 0.50% it would stop reinvesting maturing gilts.
 - Once Bank Rate had risen to at least 1%, it would start selling its holdings.
- **US.** Shortages of goods and intermediate goods like semi-conductors, have been fuelling increases in prices and reducing economic growth potential. In November, **CPI inflation hit a near 40-year record level of 6.8%** but with energy prices then falling sharply, this is probably the peak. The biggest problem for the Fed is the mounting evidence of a strong pick-up in cyclical price pressures e.g., in rent which has hit a decades high.
 - **Shortages of labour** have also been driving up wage rates sharply; this also poses a considerable threat to feeding back into producer prices and then into consumer prices inflation. It now also appears that there has been a sustained drop in the labour force which suggests the pandemic has had a longer-term scarring effect in reducing potential GDP. Economic growth may therefore be reduced to between 2 and 3% in 2022 and 2023 while core inflation is likely to remain elevated at around 3% in both years instead of declining back to the Fed’s 2% central target.
 - Inflation hitting 6.8% and the feed through into second round effects, meant that it was near certain that the **Fed’s meeting of 15th December** would take aggressive action against inflation. Accordingly, the rate of tapering of monthly \$120bn QE purchases announced at its November 3rd meeting. was doubled so that all purchases would now finish in February 2022. In addition, Fed officials had started discussions on running down the stock of QE held by the Fed. Fed officials also expected three rate rises in 2022 of 0.25% from near zero currently, followed by three in 2023 and two in 2024, taking rates back above 2% to a neutral level for monetary policy. The first increase could come as soon as March 2022 as the chairman of the Fed stated his view that the economy had made rapid progress to achieving the other goal of the Fed – “maximum employment”. The Fed forecast that inflation would fall from an average of 5.3% in 2021 to 2.6% in 2023, still above its target of 2% and both figures significantly up from previous forecasts. What was also significant was that this month the Fed dropped its description of the current level of inflation as being “transitory” and instead referred to “elevated levels” of inflation: the statement also dropped most of the language around the flexible average inflation target, with inflation now described as having exceeded 2 percent “for some time”. It did not see Omicron as being a major impediment to the need to act now to curtail the level of inflationary pressures that have built up, although Fed officials did note that it has the potential to exacerbate supply chain problems and add to price pressures.
See also comments in paragraph 3.3 under PWLB rates and gilt yields.
 - **EU.** The slow roll out of vaccines initially delayed **economic recovery** in early 2021 but the vaccination rate then picked up sharply. After a contraction of -0.3% in Q1, Q2 came in with strong growth of 2%. With Q3 at 2.2%, the EU recovery was then within 0.5% of its pre Covid size. However, the arrival of Omicron is now a major headwind to growth in quarter 4 and the expected downturn into weak growth could well turn negative, with the outlook for the first two months of 2022 expected to continue to be very weak.
 - **November’s inflation figures** breakdown shows that the increase in price pressures is not just due to high energy costs and global demand-supply imbalances for durable goods as services inflation also rose. Headline inflation reached 4.9% in November, with over half of that due to energy. However, oil and gas prices are expected to fall after the winter and so energy inflation is expected to plummet in 2022. Core goods inflation rose to 2.4% in November, its second highest ever level, and is likely to remain high for some time as it will take a long time for the inflationary impact of global imbalances in the demand and supply of durable goods to disappear. Price pressures also increased in the services sector, but wage growth remains subdued and there are no signs of a trend of faster wage growth which might lead to *persistently* higher services inflation - which would get the ECB concerned. The upshot is that the euro-zone is set for a prolonged period of inflation being above the ECB’s target of 2% and it is likely to average 3% in 2022, in line with the ECB’s latest projection.
 - **ECB tapering.** The ECB has joined with the Fed by also announcing at its meeting on 16th December that it will be reducing its QE purchases - by half from October 2022, i.e., it will still be providing significant stimulus via QE purchases for over half of next year. However, as inflation will fall back

sharply during 2022, it is likely that it will leave its central rate below zero, (currently -0.50%), over the next two years. The main struggle that the ECB has had in recent years is that inflation has been doggedly anaemic in sticking below the ECB's target rate despite all its major programmes of monetary easing by cutting rates into negative territory and providing QE support.

- The ECB will now also need to consider the impact of **Omicron** on the economy, and it stated at its December meeting that it is prepared to provide further QE support if the pandemic causes bond yield spreads of peripheral countries, (compared to the yields of northern EU countries), to rise. However, that is the only reason it will support peripheral yields, so this support is limited in its scope.
- The EU has entered a **period of political uncertainty** where a new German government formed of a coalition of three parties with Olaf Scholz replacing Angela Merkel as Chancellor in December 2021, will need to find its feet both within the EU and in the three parties successfully working together. In France there is a presidential election coming up in April 2022 followed by the legislative election in June. In addition, Italy needs to elect a new president in January with Prime Minister Draghi being a favourite due to having suitable gravitas for this post. However, if he switched office, there is a significant risk that the current government coalition could collapse. That could then cause differentials between Italian and German bonds to widen when 2022 will also see a gradual running down of ECB support for the bonds of weaker countries within the EU. These political uncertainties could have repercussions on economies and on Brexit issues.
- **CHINA.** After a concerted effort to get on top of the virus outbreak in Q1 2020, economic recovery was strong in the rest of **2020**; this enabled China to recover all the initial contraction. During 2020, policy makers both quashed the virus and implemented a programme of monetary and fiscal support that was particularly effective at stimulating short-term growth. At the same time, China's economy benefited from the shift towards online spending by consumers in developed markets. These factors helped to explain its comparative outperformance compared to western economies during 2020 and earlier in 2021.
- However, the pace of economic growth has now fallen back in **2021** after this initial surge of recovery from the pandemic and looks likely to be particularly weak in 2022. China has been struggling to contain the spread of the Delta variant through using sharp local lockdowns - which depress economic growth. Chinese consumers are also being very wary about leaving home and so spending money on services. However, with Omicron having now spread to China, and being much more easily transmissible, this strategy of sharp local lockdowns to stop the virus may not prove so successful in future. In addition, the current pace of providing boosters at 100 billion per month will leave much of the 1.4 billion population exposed to Omicron, and any further mutations, for a considerable time. The **People's Bank of China** made a start in December 2021 on cutting its key interest rate marginally to stimulate economic growth. However, after credit has already expanded by around 25% in just the last two years, it will probably leave the heavy lifting in supporting growth to fiscal stimulus by central and local government.
- Supply shortages, especially of coal for power generation, were causing widespread power cuts to industry during the second half of 2021 and so a sharp disruptive impact on some sectors of the economy. In addition, recent regulatory actions motivated by a political agenda to channel activities into officially approved directions, are also likely to reduce the dynamism and long-term growth of the Chinese economy.
- **JAPAN.** 2021 has been a patchy year in combating Covid. However, recent business surveys indicate that the economy has been rebounding rapidly in 2021 once the bulk of the population had been double vaccinated and new virus cases had plunged. However, Omicron could reverse this initial success in combating Covid.
- The Bank of Japan is continuing its **very loose monetary policy** but with little prospect of getting inflation back above 1% towards its target of 2%, any time soon: indeed, inflation was negative in July. New Prime Minister Kishida, having won the November general election, brought in a supplementary budget to boost growth, but it is unlikely to have a major effect.
- **WORLD GROWTH.** World growth was in recession in 2020 but recovered during 2021 until starting to lose momentum in the second half of the year, though overall growth for the year is expected to be about 6% and to be around 4-5% in 2022. Inflation has been rising due to increases in gas and electricity prices, shipping costs and supply shortages, although these should subside during 2022.

While headline inflation will fall sharply, core inflation will probably not fall as quickly as central bankers would hope. It is likely that we are heading into a period where there will be a **reversal of world globalisation** and a decoupling of western countries from dependence on China to supply products, and vice versa. This is likely to reduce world growth rates from those in prior decades.

- **SUPPLY SHORTAGES.** The pandemic and extreme weather events, followed by a major surge in demand after lockdowns ended, have been highly disruptive of extended worldwide supply chains. Major queues of ships unable to unload their goods at ports in New York, California and China built up rapidly during quarters 2 and 3 of 2021 but then halved during quarter 4. Such issues have led to a misdistribution of shipping containers around the world and have contributed to a huge increase in the cost of shipping. Combined with a shortage of semi-conductors, these issues have had a disruptive impact on production in many countries. The latest additional disruption has been a shortage of coal in China leading to power cuts focused primarily on producers (rather than consumers), i.e., this will further aggravate shortages in meeting demand for goods. Many western countries are also hitting up against a difficulty in filling job vacancies. It is expected that these issues will be gradually sorted out, but they are currently contributing to a spike upwards in inflation and shortages of materials and goods available to purchase.

Appendix D – Interest Rate Forecasts – 22nd December 2021

The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. These are forecasts for certainty rates, gilt yields plus 80bps:

Link Group Interest Rate View 20.12.21														
	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25
BANK RATE	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.25
3 month ave earnings	0.20	0.30	0.50	0.50	0.60	0.70	0.80	0.90	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
6 month ave earnings	0.40	0.50	0.60	0.60	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10
12 month ave earnings	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.10	1.10	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20
5 yr PWLB	1.40	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.70	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.90	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00
10 yr PWLB	1.60	1.70	1.80	1.80	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.20	2.30
25 yr PWLB	1.80	1.90	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.30	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.50	2.50
50 yr PWLB	1.50	1.70	1.80	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.20	2.20	2.30	2.30
Bank Rate														
Link	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.25
Capital Economics	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00	-	-	-	-	-
5yr PWLB Rate														
Link	1.40	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.70	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.90	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00
Capital Economics	1.40	1.40	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.80	1.90	-	-	-	-	-
10yr PWLB Rate														
Link	1.60	1.70	1.80	1.80	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.20	2.30
Capital Economics	1.60	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.80	1.80	1.90	2.00	2.00	-	-	-	-	-
25yr PWLB Rate														
Link	1.80	1.90	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.30	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.50	2.50
Capital Economics	1.80	1.80	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.20	2.30	-	-	-	-	-
50yr PWLB Rate														
Link	1.50	1.70	1.80	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.20	2.20	2.30	2.30
Capital Economics	1.40	1.50	1.60	1.70	1.80	1.90	2.00	2.20	2.30	-	-	-	-	-